

Three commands from Isaiah 54

Brynmawr Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 24th June 2012

Intro-

- Promise for us that God will enlarge us. We are to get ready because God is moving. God will again revive His people here in Wales.
- Isaiah ministered into the depression caused by the Assyrian invasion- Israel went into captivity first and then Judah followed when the Babylonians invaded. However, Isaiah's message is that a REMNANT will be left, just like a stump is left when a tree is cut down. The Assyrians cut down the trees and decimated the land. However God would take the stump, the remnant that is left of Israel, and make it grow, make it fruitful, multiplying their numbers. Even when God's people have been through tough times there is a promise of fruitfulness.
- Prophetic foreshortening- Isaiah, as the other prophets, sees the future like a series of mountains in the distance- some near, others far away. He describes what he sees as if they blur into one- some of it refers to the more distant future, some to their immediate situation. Isaiah 53 precedes this chapter, it is perhaps the most detailed of all the Old Testament predictions of what Jesus would achieve on the cross. God's people's fruitfulness ultimately comes from the victory of the Gospel.

Read Isaiah 54:1-6

'SING'- v1 'Sing O barren'

- The opposite of what you would expect! In the middle eastern culture of the day the ability to have children was hugely important to them.
- Paradox of faith. Beatitudes- blessed are the... (each one is a paradox- the opposite of what one would normally associate with being blessed). What is Isaiah saying here? Dependancy on God is a blessed position to be in. We often find it easier to depend on God when things are tough, but God wants us to depend on Him when we are in seasons of blessing too. The other nations were bloated and arrogant, Israel was being humbled, but they were in the better position because they were looking to God and God would cause their fruitfulness to exceed that of the nations around them.
- Barren woman- God is describing a city- Jerusalem- see v11-12 which speaks about God laying her foundations with sapphires and her gates with crystal (see the New Jerusalem in Revelation). In the Hebrew mind cities were female because the Hebrew word for city was feminine, hence the description of Jerusalem as the mother and her inhabitants as her children (i.e. The term 'daughter of Zion', Zion being the hill on which Jerusalem rests). The captivities were like a mother being bereaved, or like a woman being barren.
- The Church in the West has been through a tough time in terms of numbers and yet God will cause it to become fruitful again.
- The message was- sing in faith- even though you are a remnant sing because of what God is about to do! You will grow! 2Cor 5:7- we walk by faith not sight. Abraham saw with the eyes of faith, we need to do the same- Is 51:2- look to Abraham who was just 1 person but had the promise of many children- if God did it for him He will also do it for us- the children of Abraham (Gal 3:7).
- Like the psalms did, let's keep our emotions in line with God's word (ps 42:5,11; 43:11), although at times we go through trials and get sad we never need to despair- our God is with us. We praise God on the mountain tops and also in the

valleys of life. Thank, praise, declare, prophesy what God will do, for He will again cause His Church in Wales to bear much fruit!

'ENLARGE'- v2 'Enlarge the place of your tent'

- Respond in faith to what God is about to do. Basically Isaiah was saying- 'get ready for growth, enlarge your home'. If we believe God is bringing revival we need to get ready for it.
- Is 60:22- a passage given to us when we started the Church plant 'a little one shall become a thousand and a small one a strong nation. I the LORD will hasten it in it's time'. We thought this would happen immediately, but the passage says 'in it's time'. There is a season in God where what is sown springs up and bears fruit- Willie Soans spoke about a change in seasons where what we have sown will bear fruit- we need to get ready for this. A change of name is part of this, but also having a building is a faith step in line with what God is about to do. We need to get to the place where we are ready for a sudden increase.
- Faith is about hearing God, believing Him and acting out of that belief. James said that faith without deeds is dead (James 2:14-26). As God speaks to us as individuals and corporately so we make steps of obedience in line with what He says.
- Enlarging the tent- a tent is movable, trasportable, ready to go wherever God leads.
- V3 'your descendants will inherit the nations'- i.e the tent will fill the whole earth. This was prophesied by Noah in Gen 9:27 when he said 'May God extend the territories of Japheth and Japheth live in the tents of Shem'. We physically come from Japheth, Semitic peoples descend from Shem. The scattering of the Japhethites all over the earth and them coming to live in the tents of Shem prefigures the gospel going out to all nations. Really Isaiah was prophesying the growth of Israel through the preaching of the Gospel- God had promised Abraham the Semite that through him all nations of the earth would be blessed! Mt 24:14; Mt 28:19; Acts 1:8; Lk 24:47 'repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem.' We are a part of this tent which has expanded from Jerusalem and filling all the earth!
- We need to keep outward looking, keeping in mind our commission to reach the nations- this means that God will have us becoming involved with work into other nations on an increasing scale. Being outward looking also means that we think regionally as well as locally, seeing Wales as a whole impacted with the Gospel. Being outward looking means that we are focussed on evangelism as well as discipleship- we have a calling to reach the lost.

'DO NOT FEAR'- v4 'Do not fear, you will not be ashamed'

- Any change takes an element of courage, even change for the better. People use the term 'better the devil you know', but we are called to step with God into what we have not yet experienced trusting God each step of the way.
- The promise is here 'Do not fear, you will not be ashamed'- fear can make us look backwards at difficult situations we have been through, imagining that the future will be a repeat of the pain of the past, but here God encourages His people to make a step of faith trusting HIM for the future. God gives us grace for each season.
- We need courage for growth when we have been through times of pain: bereavement, loss of relationships, hurts, coming under spiritual attack. However, verse 4 says 'You will forget the shame of your youth. You will not remember the reproach of your widowhood anymore'. Here God promises the courageous such blessings of fruitfulness that the pain of the past is healed.
- What God is saying is GROW TAKES GUTS. Where has fear got a hold? What are we afraid of? Sickness? Poverty? Humiliation? Let's choose to believe God's report

and move forward in faith.

- Timothy needed encouragement to grow into all that God had for him. Paul reminded him that God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and sound mind (2Tim 1:7). Let's take that same encouragement and move forward in faith by the power of His Spirit.

Summary

- 'SING'
- 'ENLARGE'
- 'DO NOT FEAR'